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**LEXICO-SEMANTIC GROUP OF VERBS DESCRIBING
FIREARMS HANDLING
(BY THE MATERIAL OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE)**

***Abstract.** The article deals with the lexical-semantic group of English verbs used to describe firearms handling, when it comes to making shots and aim shooting in particular. The authors reveal semantic features of the verbs; identify subgroups depending on the differential seme; give contextual examples of the verbs usage.*

***Keywords:** firearms, verb, shoot, dictionary definitions, context, target shooting.*

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**ЛЕКСИКО-СЕМАНТИЧЕСКАЯ ГРУППА ГЛАГОЛОВ,
ОБОЗНАЧАЮЩИХ ДЕЙСТВИЯ ОГНЕСТРЕЛЬНЫМ ОРУЖИЕМ.
(НА МАТЕРИАЛЕ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА)**

***Аннотация.** В статье рассматривается лексико-семантическая группа английских глаголов, используемых в обращении со стрелковым оружием, когда*

речь идет о совершении выстрелов и наведении на цель. Авторы в результате лексикографического анализа толковых англо-английских словарей выявляют глаголы, относящиеся к этой группе; анализируют их семантические различия; вычленяют подгруппы глаголов на основе дифференциальной семы; приводят примеры контекстного употребления глаголов.

Ключевые слова: *огнестрельное оружие, глагол, стрелять, словарные дефиниции, контекст, прицельная стрельба.*

There have been growing tensions between the United States, European countries and Russia recently due to the political instability and a number of strategic contradictions. The Russian army and various law enforcement agencies are going through a difficult period of potential subversive, terrorist and provocative threats. Not surprisingly, the leadership of the country are currently placing greater emphasis on the defense policy and the capability of law enforcement agencies.

Tasks related to military operations and law enforcement activities are often connected with the use of weapons. Despite the emergence and widespread use of modern high-tech military technologies, sophisticated hacking, and the use of biological weapons, firearms remain traditional weapon among law enforcement agencies. Firearm is described as «a weapon from which a shot is discharged by gunpowder – usually used of small arms» in Merriam Webster online dictionary [7].

Professional firearms skills and knowledge of their both domestic and foreign types play a critical role today. However, it should be noted that participation in international military operations requires not only great shooting and combat skills, but also the ability to interact with other group members in English.

The research has shown that there is verbal vocabulary related to shooting both in Russian and in the English language. This article provides valuable insights on the English and Russian verbs used to describe firearms handling when it comes to making shots.

Most English verbs of this group can be translated into Russian as «стрелять». Nevertheless, the analysis of the dictionary definitions of each «shooting» verb makes it possible to reveal their semantic features. **To fire** - *to cause a weapon to shoot bullets, arrows, or missiles* [2]. *He fired his gun into the air* (Он выстрелил в воздух). (Here and further the translation is done by the authors).

To shoot - *to fire a bullet or an arrow* [2]. *If he's not armed, don't shoot*. (Если он не вооружен, не стреляйте). Comparing the English definitions of the verbs «to fire» and «to shoot», one can conclude that the lexeme «to fire» has a broader interpretation, since it can be used not only for the verbal representation of shooting with a bullet and arrow, but also with a rocket.

Another «shooting» verb is **to discharge** - *to fire a gun, or to fire a shot from a gun* [2]. *A soldier accidentally discharged his weapon* [5]. (Солдат случайно выстрелил из своего ружья).

The meaning «to detonate or discharge something» is expressed by the verb **to let off**. *The police officer let off a warning shot* [9]. (Полицейский произвел предупредительный выстрел).

The phrasal verb **to pop off** – *to shoot a firearm, such as a pistol* – can also be included in the verbal vocabulary group related to shooting [9]. *He popped off a couple of rounds*. (Он дал пару очередей) [1].

To describe shooting at someone from a hidden place one can use the verb **to snipe** [7]. *Enemy fighters sniped at them from vacant buildings*. (Солдаты противника обстреливали их из пустующих зданий).

The Russian verbs «застрелить», «расстрелять кого-то» can be translated into English by the phrasal verbs **to shoot smb down** and **to gun smb down**. 1) *They stormed into the office and shot down everyone there* [9]. (Они ворвались в офис и расстреляли всех). 2) *The assassin tracked down the politicians and gunned them down*. (Убийца выследил политиков и застрелил их).

The use of the verb «to shoot» in the passive voice is also associated with killing someone by shooting. *A policeman was shot dead in the city centre last night* [2]. (Минувшей ночью в центре города был застрелен полицейский).

One of the meanings of the verb «*to fusillade*» is «to attack or shoot down by simultaneous or rapidly successive gunfire». *Thousands of people were fusilladed without any form of trial* [3]. (Тысячи людей были расстреляны без какого-либо судебного разбирательства).

There are certain verbs in English used to indicate the start of firing a weapon, refraining from shooting, or its cessation. ***To open up*** – *to fire a gun or other weapon at someone, something, or an animal* [9]. *The sergeant told the soldiers to open up on the enemy position.* (Сержант приказал солдатам открыть огонь по вражеским позициям). ***To open fire*** – start firing a weapon [8]. *According to eyewitness accounts, soldiers opened fire on the crowd.* (По словам очевидцев, солдаты открыли огонь по толпе). ***To hang/hold fire*** – *to refrain from shooting (a gun, etc.)* [9]. *The sergeant told the soldiers to hold their fire.* (Сержант приказал солдатам прекратить огонь).

Several verbs in English describe the rate of fire. ***To fire off*** – *to shoot something from a weapon, especially in quick succession* [9]. *The police officer fired off warning shots when the suspect approached them.* (Офицер полиции сделал несколько предупредительных выстрелов, когда подозреваемый приблизился к ним). ***To shoot it out*** (If opposing groups or people armed with guns shoot it out, they shoot at each other until one of the groups or people is dead or defeated) [2]. *The thief decided to shoot it out with the police* [4]. (Вор решил сразаться с полицией до конца). «To shoot it out» can also be used to describe settling a matter by the use of guns [9]. *Bill and the cowboy – with whom he had been arguing – went out in the street and shot it out.*

As the research shows, the English language has quite diverse verbal lexemes with the meaning «to shoot». The next step of the study is to reveal English verbs used to characterize the quality of shooting, the question of targeting in particular.

Sharpshooting and marksmanship have always commanded a great deal of respect of people who use weapons. Due to the development of the electronics industry

and marked improvement in the design of sniper rifles, the effectiveness and accuracy of fire have increased several times in comparison with the last century.

Snipers and their weapons require significant attention in countering the growing danger of the terrorist threat. Throughout history, snipers have become a crucial component to military strategy. The best anti-sniper strategy is to train other snipers. Their professional competence, superior shooting skills and the ability to take part in outside-Russia projects thanks to the knowledge of English are becoming particularly important today. One of the main tasks in sniper shooting is proper weapon targeting.

Lexicographic analysis of some English dictionaries has shown that there is a verbal group of lexemes that describe aiming a bullet, bomb, etc., at a particular object, place, or person. ***To aim** – to direct (a weapon or camera) toward a point. The sniper aimed carefully.* (Снайпер тщательно прицелился). The word combination ***to take aim at*** has a similar meaning – *to point a gun at something before you shoot* [8]. *He quickly regained his balance, took aim, and fired.* (Он быстро восстановил равновесие и выстрелил).

The phrasal verb ***to level smth at*** – *to point a weapon at someone* [6] also has a sense of «weapon targeting». *Andy leveled the revolver at me menacingly.* (Энди грозно навел на меня пистолет).

Another verb used to describe aim shooting is ***to train*** – *aim or direct at* [8]. *He trained his gun on the burglar.* (Он направил свой пистолет на грабителя).

The meaning «to take aim with (a firearm)» is expressed by the lexeme ***to sight*** [9]. *He sighted along the barrel of the gun.* (Он прицелился, глядя вдоль ствола пистолета).

To align the sights and ***to line up the sights*** characterize aiming a firearm using the sight. *She aligned the sights of her rifle* [5]. (Она выровняла прицел своей винтовки). *Make sure you line up the sights before you fire the gun* [2]. (Убедитесь, что вы выровняли прицел, прежде чем стрелять из пистолета).

To describe aiming a weapon at someone or something one can use the verbs ***to point at*** and ***to charge*** [1]. *Don't point that gun at me* [9]. (Не направляй на меня пистолет). *He charged his weapon at me.* (Он направил свое оружие на меня).

The phrasal verb **to zero in on** means to aim precisely at a target [9]. *They zeroed in on the last snipers.* (Они избирательно направили оружие на последних снайперов).

There are not only simple lexemes to talk about aim shooting but also idioms. **To draw a bead on** – to aim a gun at someone or something [9]. *Fred drew a bead on the target and pulled the trigger.* (Фред прицелился в мишень и нажал на курок).

The meaning of *raising the cock of (a gun) in order to make it ready for firing* is given by the verb **to cock** [3]. *He picked up the fool's gun and cocked it in the direction of the children.* (Он поднял пистолет глупца и направил его в сторону детей).

The conducted research has shown that there is an extensive list of English verbs with the meaning of «to shoot» and «to aim at» in relation to firearms. 16 verbs have been revealed to describe firing a bullet from a weapon. Six verbs characterize the general action of shooting from different types of firearms: *to fire, to shoot, to discharge, to let off, to pop off, to snipe*. Four verbs can be used in the meaning of killing somebody by firing a bullet at them or being killed in this way: *to shoot smb down, to gun smb down, to be shot, to be fusilladed*. Three verbal lexemes show the rate of fire: *to fire off, to fusillade* and *to shoot it out*. Three verbs are connected with the start of firing a weapon, refraining from shooting, or its cessation: *to open up, to open fire, to hold fire*. There are 12 verbs to describe pointing or directing a weapon toward someone or something that you want to hit: *to aim, to take aim at, level at, to train, to sight, to align sights, to line up sights, to charge, to point at, to cock, to zero in on, to draw a bead on*.

Since the members of this group are simple verbs, phrasal verbs, and idioms, we can assume different forms of figurative components. A wide range of language means to describe shooting operations indicates their important place among «Military vocabulary» and prove their significance to the English speakers.

The widespread use of military words in general and shooting verbs in particular is conditioned by the frequent military conflicts in different countries and the development of new military technologies, equipment and weapons. In this regard, the

collection and study of military vocabulary is of primary importance both in the framework of history and linguistics.

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